Revealing Morphosyntactic Correlates of Force and Grammatical Mood in Unangam Tunuu for Language Reclamation
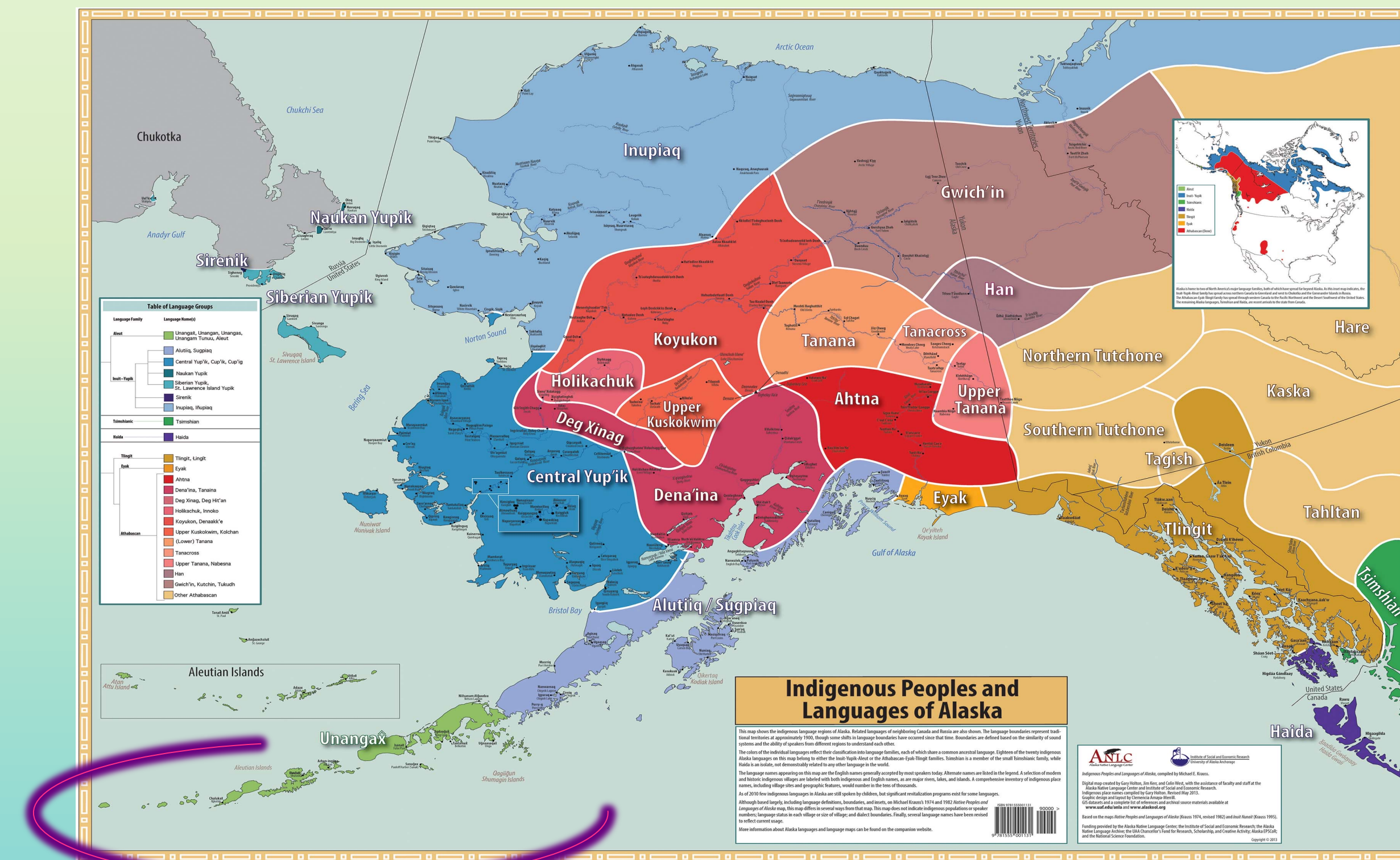
Christina Laree Newhall

Native Village of Unga | University of Arizona
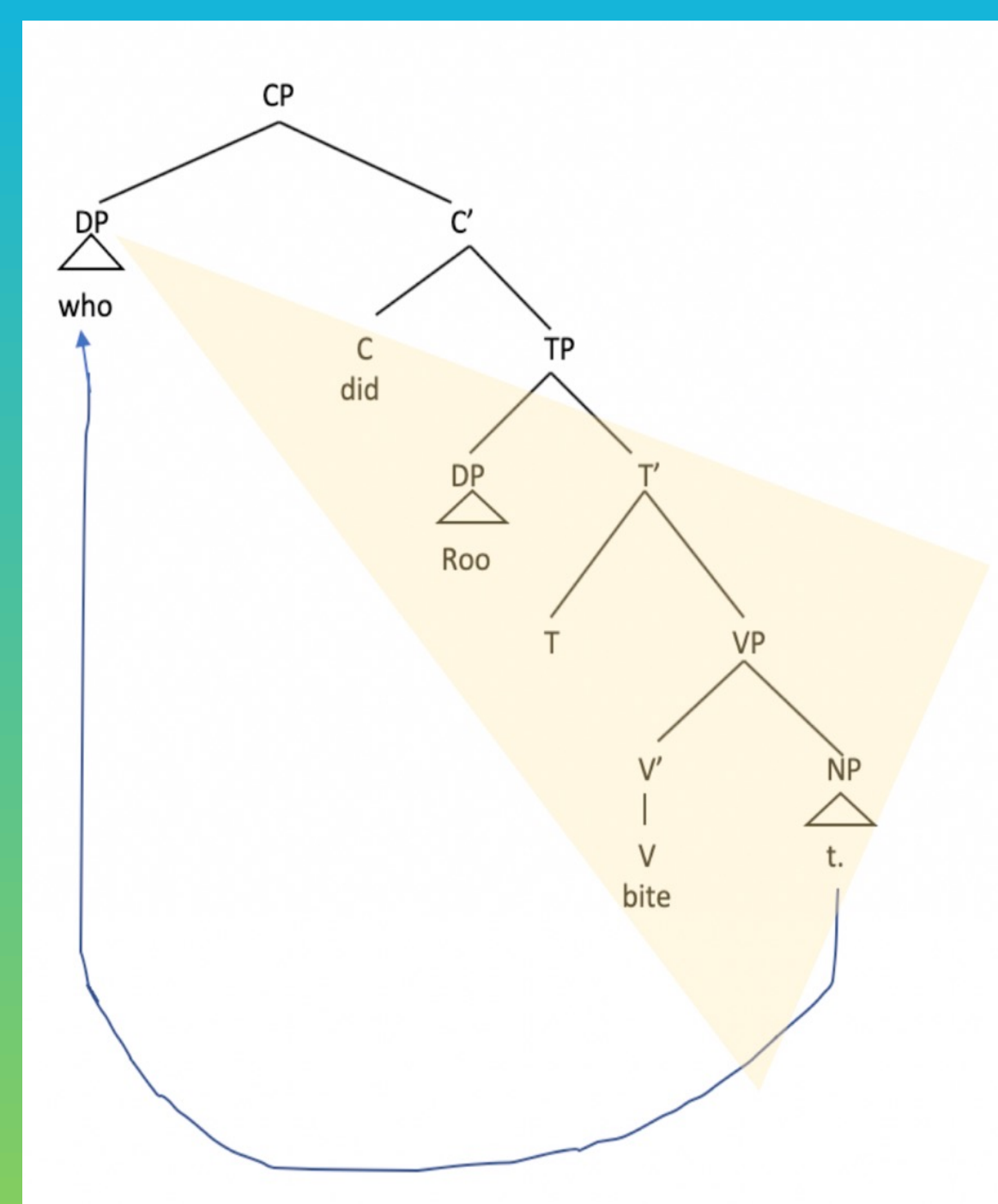
newhallc@email.arizona.edu

Background & Language

- Unangam Tunuu (Aleut) is part of the **Eskimo-Aleut language family** and is traditionally spoken in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska and Commander Islands of Russia. 3 dialects are still spoken in the archipelago.
- There are **fewer than 60 remaining fluent speakers** of Unangam Tunuu.

Indigenous Peoples and Languages of Alaska

- Unangam Tunuu is a polysynthetic language with a **suffixing morphological process.**
- Word Structure: **base**-derivational morpheme(s)-**inflectional morpheme(s)**=enclitic

Literature & Terminology

- In Eskimo-Aleut languages, mood inflection "does the work of illocutionary particles, certain modals, subordinating conjunctions, and complementizers, and of processes like English interrogative inversion" (Woodbury 2017).

- The degree of **force** is relative to statements which have a shared *illocutionary point.* A forceful speech act is intended to elicit a socially appropriate response.

- An **operator** is a semantic modifier of the constituent to which it is a sister-node; an operator has **scope** over those constituents within its syntactic domain (Reinhart 1979, Szabolcsi 2011).

Scope and Force in Unangam Tunuu

★ **Claim:** the *directive force* of a sentence can be inferred from the syntactic structure of an Unangam Tunuu verbal clause through a Distributed Morphology analysis.
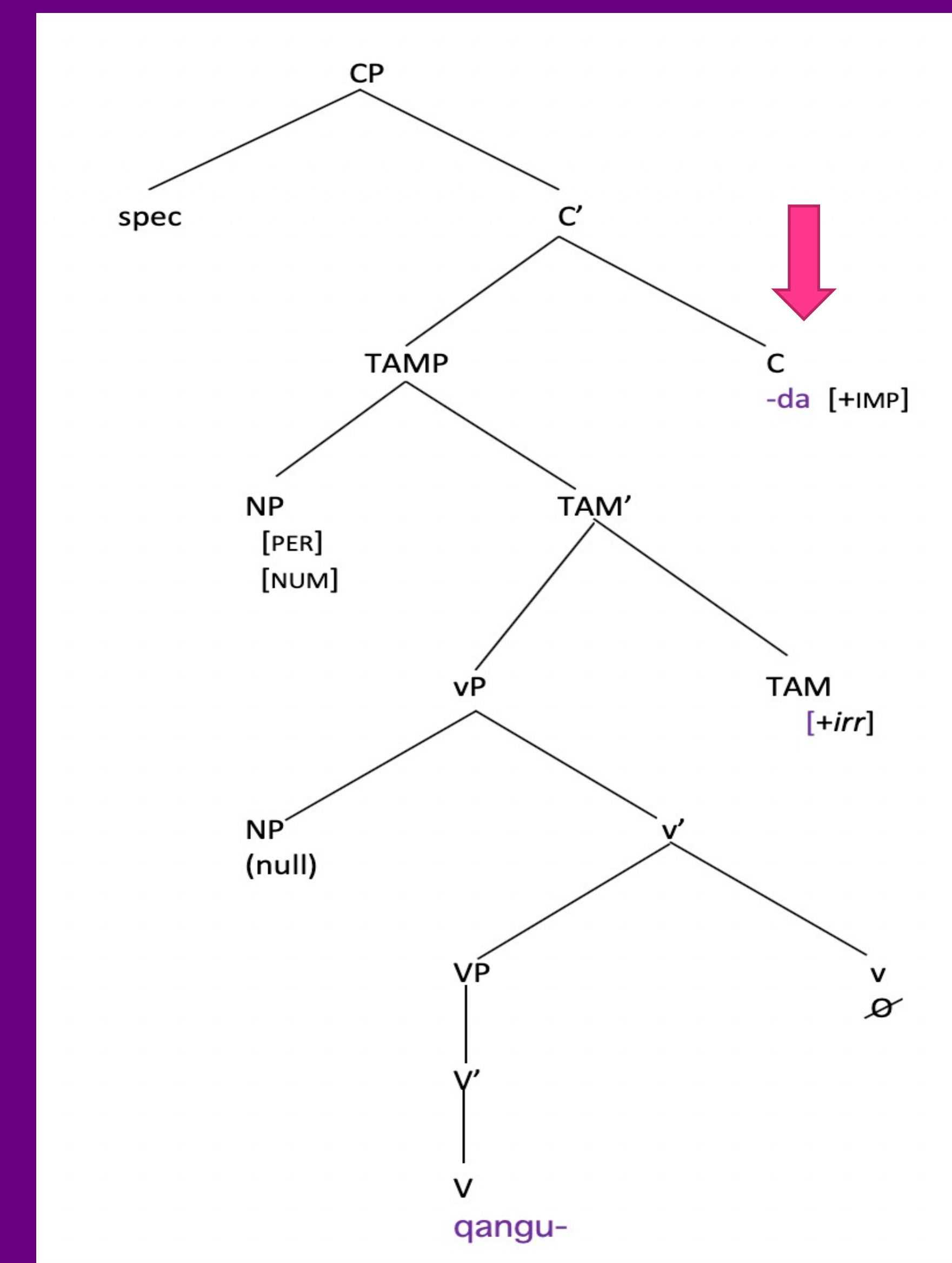
➢ Force in Unangam Tunuu can be understood through its form, that is, through the syntactic arrangement of the verbal clause.

➢ A grammatical mood-marker in Unangam Tunuu includes an operator which minimally consist of two morphosyntactic features; one for directive force (instantiated through the morphological process) and another for *irrealis* [+/-irrealis] which conveys the realization of an action/event.

Mood-markers

The mood-marker in a UT statement occupies the clausal head where it increases in both scope and directive force relative to that of a propositional marker. Verbal clauses with conditionals (COND) optatives (OPT) and imperatives (IMP) all share a similar syntactic form; see 1a) and 1b):

1a) *qanguda*
qangu-da
enter-IMP
'come in!'

1b) *tutaqagiixta*
tuta-qaĝii-x̂-ta
hear-INTRANS-3SG-OPT
'may he listen'

Methods Analysis & Theory

The analysis described here draws on a proposal (outlined in Han 1999) that imperatives include an imperative operator in the syntax that encodes directive force through a directive feature and an irrealis feature that encodes modality, which contributes an interpretation that a certain state is or is not realized.

The analysis here follows theoretical assumptions of the Minimalist program and Distributed Morphology wherein the lexicon includes morphosyntactic features as well as lexical items and where morphosyntactic features are expressed on the lexical item, giving rise to syntactic structure features on functional heads (Han 1999, Chomsky 1995, Harley & Noyer 1998).

Significance

An analysis of the morphosyntax of Unangam Tunuu and the correlations of force may elucidate how inflectional markers are used in performances of speech acts and assist in formulating teaching pedagogy for language reclamation programs.

References & Acknowledgments

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